



The Deputy Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

February 19, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT G. CARD
UNDER SECRETARY FOR ENERGY,
SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

JOHN A. GORDON
UNDER SECRETARY FOR NUCLEAR
SECURITY

HEADS OF DEPARTMENTAL ELEMENTS

FROM:

FRANCIS S. BLAKE

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "F. S. Blake", is written over the printed name.

SUBJECT:

Rebuilding the DOE Workforce Through Entry-Level Hiring and
Development

The Department of Energy's (DOE) critical missions are key to supporting national security as well as the safety and economic security of the American public. To accomplish these vital missions we must do everything possible to ensure that we have the right mix of people, jobs and skills.

As the DOE workforce ages, more employees are becoming retirement eligible. The percentage of staff in entry- and mid-level positions continues to decrease, and there is inadequate diversity in many areas. These factors, coupled with growing skills gaps, contribute significantly to our human capital management challenges. We must systematically address these challenges by taking action to replenish the DOE pipelines with critical skills.

Hiring and Development Options

To aid your organizations in recruitment and retention, DOE has several hiring flexibilities and pay incentives available that greatly increase our competitiveness in the marketplace. (See attached summary of DOE programs.)

I am pleased to announce the newly-established Department of Energy Career Intern Program (CIP). This program is based on a new excepted service hiring authority which is already successful at some DOE sites. It features an employee development approach providing entry-level hires with core training and experiential assignments to enhance job success and retention. This new, 2-year program began as a result of this year's Human Capital Summit and features developmental training and work experiences that are directly related to DOE's mission. I hope this new program will become a cornerstone in DOE's efforts to rebuild its workforce, and I strongly urge you to include it in your entry-level hiring strategies.



I have asked the Director, Office of Management, Budget and Evaluation (OMBE), through his Office of Human Resources Management, to follow up with your organizations and to provide additional guidance and support to enhance your entry-level hiring and development capabilities.

For entry-level hiring, I am willing to entertain temporary adjustments to Full Time Equivalency (FTE) control levels in certain circumstances to allow your organizations to address critical skills mix challenges. Upon request, the Director, OMBE will consider providing you limited FTE relief for this purpose. This relief will apply to entry-level appointees while they are completing internship, work study or similar program requirements prior to conversion to full career appointments, at which time they must be absorbed into your regular workforce FTE allocations.

Attachment

CAREER INTERN PROGRAM (CIP)

This new, 2-year corporate entry-level hiring and development program began as a result of a Human Capital Summit initiative and is designed to become a cornerstone in the Department's workforce rebuilding efforts. It maximizes use of new hiring authorities and pay flexibilities to attract and retain highly-qualified, diverse technical and administrative/management candidates at the entry-level (GS-5, 7 and 9). It provides work and developmental training experiences that show a broad overview of the breadth, complexity and importance of DOE's mission. A new, dual-track feature allows for participants to initially take common core training as a group with subsequent training divided into either (1) a scientific/engineering or (2) a business track, according to the participants' target position. Key program components are:

Recruitment and Hiring Features:

- Emphasizes use of new Federal Career Intern Appointing Authority (see below). This 2-year excepted service authority, designed for use with entry-level developmental programs, provides maximum flexibility in recruitment strategy design, targeted recruitment, ease of hiring, and conversion to permanent appointment after completion of program requirements.
- Recruitment and hiring are carried out at the local level with corporate support. Program participants are employees of the hiring site.
- Pay flexibilities include: special salary rates for certain occupations, recruitment bonuses, superior qualifications (i.e., "advance in hire") appointments; accelerated promotions, and the new student loan repayment option. These are all appealing pay choices that can be used solely or in combination to craft a compelling offer to attract and retain quality candidates.

Training and Development Features:

- Orientation that provides an overview of Federal government and DOE operations;
- Centrally-funded common core training with separate training tracks for technical and non-technical career paths;
- Individual Development Plan for each participant;
- Incorporation of web-based training through the DOE OnLine Learning Center;
- Field/Program Office specific work and training assignments;
- Rotational assignment(s) in headquarters or field offices, laboratories and/or contractor organizations (minimum of one 30-day assignment required); and,
- A trained mentor assigned to each participant.

FEDERAL CAREER INTERN APPOINTING AUTHORITY (For use in CIP/other hires)

This new excepted service hiring authority is designed to help agencies recruit and attract talented candidates as well as current employees into a variety of occupations at the entry level. Intended for positions at GS-5, 7 and 9, this 2-year excepted service authority was designed for use with entry-level hiring and developmental programs, and provides maximum flexibility in recruitment strategy design, targeted recruitment, hiring ease, and conversion to

permanent appointment after completion of program requirements. Key features are:

- Appointments are in the excepted service and may be made year round;
- There is no public notice requirement (no need to advertise vacancies);
- There is no limit on promotion potential; and,
- Requires a 2-year formal training and development plan.

STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (SCEP)

More commonly known as the "Co-Op" program, this entry-level "work-study" program is a structured year-round program that requires students at various educational levels (high school, college, graduate school, and certificate study) to perform work related to his/her academic program. There are a number of colleges and universities, high schools, and certificate programs whose students meet eligibility requirements. Students must be enrolled in school and may work for the Department on a part-time or full-time basis. Upon completion of the educational and work requirements, students may be non-competitively converted to permanent Federal employee status.

Recruitment is targeted, and an organization's needs are matched to an educational institution. Students are Federal employees and are hired at a grade level appropriate to their study level and work experience. For example, students at the university level are typically paid at the GS-3, 4 or 5 level. Key features are:

- Improved diversity of candidates;
- Students are appointed into the excepted service;
- Initial appointments may be made any time of the year;
- Work must be related to the student's academic program;
- Open to all students (e.g., high school, college, graduate school, certificate programs);
- Written agreement among all parties;
- Flexible scheduling of work assignments; and,
- Conversion option to career/career-conditional appointment after work/school requirements are met.

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT INTERN (PMI) PROGRAM

The PMI program is an entry-level career development and training program designed to attract outstanding individuals at the graduate degree level who have an interest in and commitment to a career in public service. Candidates are nominated by the dean, director or chair of their academic program during their year of graduation and undergo a rigorous application and screening process conducted by the Office of Personnel Management. Once candidates are finalists, they are eligible to be appointed quickly and directly by any Federal agency. PMIs are hired at the GS-9 level and are put on an accelerated career track, rotating through Federal agencies to develop their management and leadership skills. PMIs are eligible for non-competitive conversion to career or career-conditional status after 2 years and are eligible for promotion to GS-12. Key features are:

- Candidates must have received or be scheduled to receive a graduate degree and have demonstrated an exceptional ability and personal interest in a career in public service;
- PMI finalists are appointed between the spring and December 31 of the year in which they are selected as finalists;
- PMIs are appointed into the excepted service and can be converted to career/career-conditional appointment after completion of program and work requirements;
- PMIs are appointed at the GS-9 Step 1 and qualify for GS-12 upon conversion;
- PMIs engage in at least 80 hours of formal training per year and are provided at least one rotational assignment; and,
- Hiring offices must reimburse OPM a fee of \$4,800 per PMI to cover the costs associated with recruitment, selection, placement orientation, and graduation of PMIs.

DOE SPECIFIC EXCEPTED SERVICE APPOINTING AUTHORITIES

DOE has three excepted service appointing authorities that can be used when recruiting and retaining highly-qualified staff. These are the DOE Act (EJ pay plan), the DOD Act (EK pay plan) and the NNSA (EN pay plan). These authorities may be used to fill up to a certain number of positions in predominantly scientific, engineering, and technical areas, with the DOD authority specifically for those positions performing activities relating to the safety of DOE's defense nuclear facilities and operations. Key features are:

- The use of pay banding using broad salary ranges allows for considerable flexibility (pay bands I and II are comparable to GS-5, 7 and 9); and,
- These authorities may be used to fill positions from within and outside DOE without normal announcement or competition under certain circumstances.

THE ROBERT GEE INTERN PROGRAM

This program enhances the awareness of DOE's career opportunities among college students, especially in the areas of science and technology, while helping a diverse group of students develop the skills and knowledge to meet DOE's technical staffing needs and nurturing their potential as future leaders. Highly-qualified students are selected through partnerships with various associations representing minority colleges and universities. There is no charge to assigned staffing ceilings for this program, because these students are not a part of the Federal workforce; however, there are funding requirements which will be credited toward DOE organizations' commitments to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other minority educational institutions. Students may work during the summer or year-round. Key features are:

- No charge to assigned staffing ceilings; however, there are funding requirements;
- Program meets organizational commitments to minority educational institutions; and,
- Students may work just in summer or year-round.